

VARIANCES TO STANDARDS APPLICATION

Initial Application (two years)

Purpose: [ARM 10.55.604\(1\)](#) "A local board of trustees may apply to the Board of Public Education through the Superintendent of Public Instruction to implement a variance to a standard or a section of standards, excluding standards stating statutory criteria, standards pertaining to educator licensure or endorsement, and content standards as defined by the Board of Public Education and provided in guidance from the Superintendent of Public Instruction."

DUE DATES (check one)

- First semester implementation; first Monday in March
 Second semester implementation; first Monday in July
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COUNTY: Flathead

DISTRICT: Bigfork

LIST EACH SCHOOL THAT IS REQUESTING THE VARIANCE:

Bigfork Middle School

1. Standard(s) for which a variance is requested, e.g., 10.55.709. If there is a program delivery standard, be sure to list it as well, e.g., 10.55.1801.

Library and Media Standards as defined in 10.55.709

2. **Provide evidence that local community stakeholders were involved in the consideration and development of the proposed variance. Community stakeholder groups include parents, community members, and students as applicable.**

Please see attached letter

3. **Provide evidence that local school stakeholders were involved in the consideration and development of the proposed variance. School stakeholder groups include trustees, administrators, teachers and classified school staff.**

Please see attached letter and meeting notes.

4. **Attach Board of Trustee meeting minutes that show the Board of Trustees adopted the application for a variance at an official, properly noticed meeting.**

5. **Describe the variance requested.**

Bigfork Elementary & Middle School combined campus has a 1.0 FTE librarian. Combined enrollment numbers put us about 80 students over the 1.0 FTE for Library and Media standards requirements. We are requesting approval for a .5 FTE Library and Media variance from the standard defined in 10.55.709.

Approving the variance would allow for the combined continuation of instructional technology/media arts (1.5 FTE), Leveled Reading Material and Wonders Walk-to-Read supports for every K-5th student (1.0 FTE) (equivalent of 2.5 Instructional paraprofessionals) and Librarian Services (1.0 FTE) to remain in the K-8 rotation.

Additionally, Bigfork High School serves just over 300 students 9th-12th grade on the same campus as the Bigfork Elementary and Middle school. Although Bigfork High School is at the lower end of the student requirement, 1 FTE is employed for Library and Media Services. We believe the total 2 FTE Librarians as well as the combined supports mentioned above more than satisfy the spirit of the requirements.

6. **Provide a statement of the mission and goals of this proposed variance.**

It is our intent to ensure students are fulfilling the Montana Content Standards for Library Media and Information Literacy through a collaborative approach including grade level library access and instruction, technology/media instruction and a comprehensive literacy program facilitated by homeroom teachers.

7. List specific measurable objectives that demonstrate the proposed variance will meet or exceed the results under the current standard(s).

-Kindergarten through 4th grade students will be scheduled for library services on a rotation to consist of no less than 25% of total electives opportunities.

-5th - 8th grade students will be scheduled for library services through grade level master scheduling to consist of no less than 15% of total elective opportunities.

-6th Grade students will receive (2) two periods of ELA services with (1) period having a specific literacy focus.

-7th and 8th Grade students will have weekly access time available to both the K-8th Library, as well as the high school library.

- Kindergarten – 5th grade students will participate in Wonders “walk-to-read” programs ensuring they have continual access to leveled resources and assessment.

- Kindergarten through 4th grade students will be scheduled for technology/media services on a rotation to consist of no less than 25% of total electives opportunities.

- 5th – 8th grade students will be scheduled for library services through grade level master scheduling to consist of no less than 20% of total elective opportunities.

-3rd -8th grade students will be provided Cromebooks at a 1:1 ratio, so that homeroom and core course teachers can incorporate media literacy standards across the curriculum.

8. What data or evidence will be gathered to document progress toward meeting the measurable objectives?

Elementary and Middle School master schedules and rotations schedules will be reviewed annually to ensure measurable objectives for each grade level are fulfilled.

Cross curricular inquiry/research standards will be evaluated by content department and reflected in curriculum development documents as well as individual evaluations

9. Describe how and why the proposed variance would be:

a. Workable.

The vast majority of our proposed variance objectives are established practices or norms within each course or grade level. Adjustments have been discussed, reviewed and edited in fulfillment of the variance application process.

b. Educationally sound.

The additional supports defined in this request more than offset any limitation possibly incurred through the .5FTE shortage. Specifically, ARM 10.55.1801 (1) (a) (i-iii) speak to the importance of flexibility, collaboration of staff while modeling and supporting appropriate and ethical use of information. The fact our plan to compensate the .5FTE shortages requires these standards and sub-standards be a central focus only enhances the realities they will be fulfilled.

- c. Where applicable, aligned with program standards under ARM 10.55.1101 through 10.55.2101.

The vast majority of the Library Media Program Delivery Standards defined in ARM 10.55.1801 and outlined in the basic program description will continue to be fulfilled by our 2.0 FTE librarians.

- d. Where applicable, aligned with content standards under ARM Chapters 53 and 54.
N/A

Required school district signatures:

Board Chair Name: _____

Board Chair Signature: _____ Date: _____

Superintendent Name: _____

Superintendent Signature: _____ Date _____

Mail the signed form to:

**Accreditation and Educator Preparation Division
Office of Public Instruction
PO Box 202501
Helena, MT 59620-2501**

OPI USE ONLY

Superintendent of Public Instruction: _____ Date _____

Approve Deny

Board of Public Education Chair _____ Date _____

Approve Deny

On February 3rd 2021, I met with Deb Johnson, parent of a middle and high school students, about her thoughts on a library variance. We discussed that Bigfork School District just falls short, based on our population, of meeting the requirements for librarians. Mrs. Johnson listen as I shared numbers with her. Her response was, “ Our librarians do such great work, meeting the needs of our students, I do not see the need of adding another part time position.” She said she understands why we should apply for another variance in this case and support Bigfork Schools as an appropriate response. Mrs. Johnson went on to state, “If it was any other librarians, I my feel different, but they do a remarkable job. Which I agreed.

Mark Hansen, Principal
Bigfork High School

Parent response to variance

Brenda Clarke <bclarke@bigfork.k12.mt.us>

Thu 2/4/2021 9:55 AM

To: Matt Jensen <mattj@bigfork.k12.mt.us>

From: Tabatha Venezio <tvenezio@bigfork.k12.mt.us>

Sent: Thursday, February 4, 2021 8:40 AM

To: Brenda Clarke <bclarke@bigfork.k12.mt.us>

Subject: Re: variance

Here you go!

To Whom It May Concern:

As a parent of two Bigfork Elementary students, it is my belief that our library exceeds expectations when it comes to providing students with learning opportunities and resources within a school library. Students rotate to library as part of a "specials" rotation, during which time they are given the experiences necessary to learn the inner workings of a library and the resources it offers, as well as helping to foster a love for reading and books!

Sincerely,

Tabatha Venezio

Library Variance

Scarlett Sherman <scarletts@bigfork.k12.mt.us>

Fri 2/5/2021 10:53 AM

To: Matt Jensen <mattj@bigfork.k12.mt.us>; Charlie Appleby <charliea@bigfork.k12.mt.us>; Mark Hansen <mhansen@bigfork.k12.mt.us>; Julie Bonner <julieb@bigfork.k12.mt.us>; Tanya McAnally <tanyam@bigfork.k12.mt.us>; Jim Benn <jbenn@bfsd38.org>; Leslie Stodghill <lstodghill@bigfork.k12.mt.us>; Lori Davis <ldavis@bigfork.k12.mt.us>; Ann Dorr <annd@bigfork.k12.mt.us>

Matt and et al.,

Julie and I met Wednesday with Tanya and Jim to discuss the Variance. I'm sorry we didn't have time to talk with Leslie or Ann. Lori reached out to Julie and they discussed the topic. Here is a response from Julie and me. We support applying again for the Variance.

It is my understanding that the state sees our school in 3 ways; 1)K-6 2)7/8 and 3)9-12. That being said, the 7/8 school at last count had 140 students. The state says at 126 students we need a .5 FTE librarian for the 7/8 school. Therefore, we are currently over by only 14. We know that we have always vacillated right around 130 give or take students in the 7/8 school for decades. Thankfully, the state of Montana has put the option of the variance in place. I think it is important to note two things: 1) the state of Montana values librarians and sees that libraries are extremely important for our students, and 2) the State of Montana recognizes the ability to staff a .5 person is unrealistic. For these reasons, the variance exists and supports Montana schools.

Here is how our school is meeting the needs of our students. The person in the position of the elementary school librarian has historically worked especially hard to try to meet the needs of not only our Pre K-6 students, but also our 7/8 students. There is time set aside weekly for those students to be able to visit the library to check out books, and whatever items are physically not available in the elementary library, are obtained from the high school library. Both libraries share resources whenever possible and both librarians work collaboratively to meet the needs of the 7/8 students.

Furthermore, from the beginning of a students' career at Bigfork schools they have exposure to the library. They begin with an introduction to the areas within the library and use of the library catalog. Students learn about the many research databases we subscribe to in the library as well as in their elementary computer classes. These research skills are continued on through to the middle school not only in the library whenever the librarian is available to them, but also research skills are touched upon collaboratively with the middle school technology teacher. It is because of all this collaboration that we believe we are able to meet the needs of our 7/8 students ultimately preparing them for success as they transition to the high school.

As librarians and technology teachers in the Bigfork School District, we see value in the variance as it allows us to continue the collaborative work we do to ensure our students have appreciation for libraries as places to support their learning and to find books they enjoy. In

addition, the classes provided through our technology staff allow them to grow skills needed to prepare them to learn in the digital age.



Scarlett Sherman

Librarian | Bigfork High School

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email: scarletts@bigfork.k12.mt.us